

Marines, Sailors, Civilians, and Families,

As your new Commandant, let me begin by stating how proud I am of our Corps during this time of war and great national challenge. You are honorably carrying on our long legacy of selfless service to the Nation. On the dusty plains of Iraq, in the mountains of Afghanistan, and in numerous other locations, Marines and Sailors are engaged in a complex form of warfare and are serving with great distinction. Here at home countless others ensure our Corps remains ready for the fight. The task before us is challenging, but, Marines, you are a tough breed — born of epic battles and tempered in the crucible of honor. We will persevere and we will win!

***Our Marines and Sailors in combat are our number one priority.***  
With this priority in mind, we will focus on the following over the next few years:

- ***Achieve victory in the Long War.***
- ***Right-size our Corps to achieve a 1:2 deployment-to-dwell ratio.***
- ***Provide our Nation a naval force that is fully prepared for employment as a MAGTF across the spectrum of conflict.***
- ***Reset and modernize to “be most ready when the Nation is least ready.”***
- ***Improve the quality of life for our Marines and our families.***
- ***Rededicate ourselves to our Core Values and warrior ethos.***
- ***Posture the Marine Corps for the future.***

I have provided separate guidance to the general officers of the Marine Corps to advance these important areas of focus. Our Corps has fought hard and worked arduously these past few years, and there is still much to be done – but together, we can achieve these goals.

*Within 30 days, I want commanders at all levels to review this Guidance with their Marines, Sailors, and civilians.* I plan to visit many of you over the next several months. I will seek your feedback on this Guidance and your ideas on how we can continue to defeat our adversaries, best serve our Nation, and forge the next chapter in the proud history of our Corps.

**Semper Fidelis,**

James T. Conway  
General, U.S. Marine Corps  
Commandant of the Marine Corps

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## Introduction

**A**merica's Marines are fully engaged in the fight for freedom around the globe. Fundamental to this fight are our forward-deployed Marines and Sailors. ***I restate for emphasis: Our Marines and Sailors in combat are our number one priority in all that we do.*** It is through their tremendous sacrifices and those of their fellow service men and women that we will ultimately prevail.

Our commitment to the Long War is characterized by central campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as by diverse and sustained engagement around the globe. Though we fight overseas, make no mistake, this is a war in defense of our homeland. It is a multi-faceted, *generational* struggle that will not be won in one battle, in one country, or by one method. Many of the underlying causes of the Long War will persist in the coming decades and will be exacerbated by states and transnational actors that are unwilling or unable to integrate into the global community. Some will resort to violence as a means to realize their political objectives, manipulate populations, acquire territory, secure resources, or achieve prestige. In some regions, competition for increasingly limited natural resources may create additional instability and conflict. The geopolitical landscape will be further destabilized by the emergence of regional powers and global near-peer competitors, some of whom may seek to undermine US strategic interests. In this environment, along with the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Coast Guard, we must be able to rapidly adapt to broad strategic conditions and wide ranging threats. ***As a Corps, we must remain faithful to our enduring mission — to be where our country needs us, when she needs us, and to prevail over whatever challenges we face.***

## Our Nation is at War!

***American history, recent as well as remote has fully demonstrated the vital need for the existence of a strong force in readiness. Such a force, versatile, fast-moving and hard-hitting ... can prevent the growth of potentially large conflagrations by prompt and vigorous action during their incipient stages. The Nation's shock troops must be the most ready when the Nation is least ready ... to provide a balanced force in readiness for a naval campaign and, at the same time, a ground-and-air striking force ready to suppress or contain international disturbances short of large-scale war.***

***82nd Congress, 1952***

As in generations past, when our fellow citizens, our freedoms, or our way of life are threatened, America's clarion call resounds: "*Send in the Marines!*" We have answered this call: we are engaged and, until this Long War is over, we will stay engaged. Magnificent young patriots have entered our ranks and carry our colors where the fighting is most intense. Thousands of Marines have joined in combat — and thousands more will do so in the future.

Most recently, the resourcefulness and versatility of our Marines have enabled our forces in Iraq to successively conduct major combat operations, engage in stability and security operations, and then transition to counterinsurgency (COIN) operations. Marines continue to succeed across the spectrum of conflict — often within the same deployment, within the same battle, and, frequently, within the same day.

This adaptability is a core competency and trademark of our Corps — and must remain so for generations to come. The Long War requires skillful strategic communications, cultural understanding, complex ethical decision-making, and combat power provided by "boots on the ground." It demands flexible organizations that adroitly apply a mix of combat and non-lethal actions; interagency capabilities and joint warfare applications; innovative use of airpower; and synchronization of intelligence activities. For rapid integration of these capabilities, no other military formation is more prepared to execute the full range of counterinsurgency tasks than the Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF) — our fundamental fighting organization. These efforts will ensure we continue to provide the joint force a unique, additive capability — one which is much greater than the sum of its parts. As we refine these capabilities within the MAGTF and integrate them with all the other elements of national power, we will further generate the institutional agility that has been the hallmark of our success.

Looking ahead to the challenges of the Long War, the Defense Department's 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) directed that we enhance counterinsurgency capabilities. Our Marine component to Special Operations Command is a part of this commitment. Other types of forces, unique to counterinsurgency operations and much in demand, will also have to be stood up. However, we will maintain robust, contingency response forces required by law to be ***“the Nation’s shock troops,” always ready — and always capable of forcible entry.***

To further expand the Corps' contribution to winning the Long War, we must:

- Develop major training exercises, similar to our previous “Emerald Express” series, to focus on interagency and coalition operations.
- Lay out a plan that implements the post-QDR road map directives, while preserving core warfighting capabilities and capacity.
- Assess homeland defense roles and missions that could be accomplished by increased employment of Marine Forces Reserve units when these units are not forward deployed.

## Right-sizing the Force

To meet the inevitable crises that arise, our Corps must be sufficiently manned, well trained, and properly equipped. While we must seek to capitalize on advances in technology, regardless of task, it is our magnificent Marines who will invariably decide the outcome; our successes will be borne on their very capable shoulders.

*Strain on the Individual.* Like the Cold War, the Long War is a generational struggle that will not be measured by the number of near-term deployments or rotations; it will be a long-term fight against adversaries and cooperation with global partners. To meet these challenges, we must ensure that our personnel policies, organizational construct, and training support operating at the “sustained rate of fire.” Our most precious resource is the individual Marine, and our institution must look after their well-being. To avoid an adverse toll on our Marines and their families, and prevent a decrease in readiness, the Secretary of Defense established a 1:2 deployment-to-dwell goal for all active component forces. The application of this policy will do much to posture our forces for the Long War and relieve the strain on those superb Americans who have volunteered to fight the Nation's battles.

With unwavering standards and in a competitive arena, our magnificent Recruiting Command continues to recruit the best of America into our ranks — but we may have to ask our recruiters to do more. Similarly, our fights thus far in Iraq and Afghanistan have been a Total Force effort. Our Reserves have

once again performed with grit and determination — and we may have to ask them to do more. However, as our Marines have made abundantly clear, when there is a fight, they want to be part of it.

*Strain on the Institution.* Current wartime deployments dictate an almost singular focus on preparing units for their next rotation in irregular warfare operations. As a result, the skills Marines need for combined-arms maneuver, mountain warfare, amphibious, and jungle operations have deteriorated. Moreover, our major warfighting headquarters have been limited in their ability to exercise the sophisticated skill sets that have enabled Marine Expeditionary Forces to achieve such formidable success in all types of battle. Achieving the prescribed 1:2 deployment-to-dwell ratio (1:5 for our Reserves) will strengthen our capacity to train for any clime and place and fulfill our promise to be “most ready when the Nation is least ready.”

***Our deployment cycles must not only support training for irregular warfare, they must also provide sufficient time for recovery and maintenance as well as training for other contingency missions. Fulfilling our 1:2 deployment-to-dwell ratio is an obligation to our Marines and to our combat readiness; our Corps must be structured, manned, and resourced accordingly.***

Therefore, Deputy Commandants and Headquarters Marine Corps (HQMC) Directors will:

- Determine structure and manning requirements to meet a 1:2 deployment-to-dwell ratio for sustained combat operations across the operating forces; pay particular attention to low-density / high-demand units (e.g., combat service support units, rotary wing squadrons, intelligence and radio battalions, task organized units such as Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) Combat Logistics Battalions, etc.).
- Examine our requirements for recruiters, trainers, infrastructure, materiel, and equipment to both support manning at a 1:2 deployment-to-dwell ratio and training across the spectrum of warfare.
- Assess the impact of a 1:5 deployment-to-dwell ratio for the Reserve component and how the Total Force can best be employed to support a 1:2 deployment-to-dwell ratio for active forces.

## Naval Operating Forces and Concepts

As our Nation's naval force in readiness, the Navy-Marine Corps Team has the unique ability to provide forward-deployed expeditionary combat forces in response to crises. Within the last two years, the Navy-Marine Corps Team has conducted combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, brought relief to hundreds of thousands devastated by the tsunami in southern Asia, and evacuated our citizens in Lebanon in the largest non-combatant evacuation since the fall of Vietnam. No more responsive, no more lethal force provides our Nation's leaders with such a powerful range of options.

As naval partners, the Navy and Marine Corps will implement objectives outlined in the Naval Operations Concept. We will help to mature concepts designed to increase naval force capability, such as the Naval Expeditionary Combat Command, Global Fleet Station, strategic-level distributed operations, broadened MEU operations, and expanded use of maritime prepositioning ships. Working closely with our Navy and Coast Guard partners, we will advance the amphibious and expeditionary capabilities the Combatant Commanders rely upon to meet their emerging challenges.

***Our “Soldiers of the Sea” — an amphibious combat force, operating from a sea base — will be able to respond rapidly and win decisively.*** To this end, the Marine Corps, working closely with the Navy, will:

- Strengthen concepts and training that enhance naval contributions to the Long War.
- Hone the National Maritime Strategy. The “Arc of Instability” is substantially a maritime domain and, therefore, a naval force is uniquely suited to respond.
- Ensure there are sufficient amphibious, surface fire support, and maritime prepositioning ships to meet current and projected requirements by developing a plan that encompasses next generation capabilities.
- Refine aviation plans and programs to build a Marine aviation force that provides the greatest possible warfighting capabilities to the MAGTF and Combatant Commanders, supports emerging naval and joint operational concepts, and meets integration requirements.

## A Force in Readiness: Reset for Today, Modernize for Tomorrow

To meet the demands of the Long War, we must properly reset the force in order to simultaneously fight, train, and sustain our Corps. We have experienced equipment usage rates as much as seven times greater than peacetime rates — tremendously decreasing the projected lifespan of our gear. To support our Marines in combat, we have routinely drawn additional equipment from strategic stocks; these stocks need to be replenished so as to remain responsive to emerging threats. Congress has responded rapidly and generously to our requests for equipment and increased protection for our Marines and Sailors. It remains our responsibility to prudently manage these resources as we transition to modernization.

As careful stewards of our Nation's resources, we must decide the most effective way to modernize the Total Force. We must make tough decisions: whether to replace aging equipment with similar platforms or to procure next generation capabilities — as we will with the STOVL Joint Strike Fighter and Expeditionary Fighting Vehicle.

*It is a doctrine of war not to assume the enemy will not come, but rather to rely on one's readiness to meet him; not to presume that he will not attack, but rather to make one's self invincible.*

Sun Tzu  
*The Art of War*

Our bases and stations have provided unparalleled support to our forward-deployed warfighters, Marines training for war, and their families. It is our obligation to ensure these Marines and civilians have the necessary tools to continue their superb management of our limited resources.

***Our reset and modernization efforts must remain a high priority if we are to provide lethal Marine Air Ground Task Forces — fully equipped, trained, and ready to engage across the range of conflict — both now and especially in the future.*** Therefore, Deputy Commandants and HQMC Directors will:

- Continue to assess and seek funding for resetting damaged or worn equipment and reconstituting prepositioning programs.
- Continue to assess, seek funding for, and integrate into training and operational forces the latest in protective equipment and IED-defeat programs for our engaged forces.

- Conduct an assessment of fire support to determine the adequacy, integration, and modernization required in ground, aviation, and naval surface fires.
- Pursue modernization programs that are essential for a Marine Corps that can fight and win the Nation's future battles.
- Invest in science and technology to provide the “seed corn” for future capabilities and prevent technological surprise.

## Beyond the Horizon: Posturing our Corps for the Future

History has proven that we cannot narrowly define the conditions for which our military must be ready. With little warning, our Nation has repeatedly called our Corps front and center — in the southern Pacific after Pearl Harbor, in Korea after the communist invasion in 1950, in the sands of Kuwait during DESERT STORM, in the mountains of Afghanistan after 9/11, and in southern Asia in the wake of the catastrophic tsunami of 2004. Each of these strategic surprises demonstrates the broad range of possibilities for which our Corps must be prepared. ***What we do today will ensure success in the decades to come — but only if we plan and prepare with forethought and prudence.***

Planning and preparedness in the Long War requires a talented, multi-dimensional force that is well trained and educated for employment in all forms of warfare. Historically, our Corps has produced respected leaders who have demonstrated intellectual agility in warfighting. As of late, our deployment tempo increasingly places our Professional Military Education (PME) programs at risk. No level of risk is acceptable, however, if it threatens the steady flow of thinkers, planners, and aggressive commanders who can execute.

*To be prepared for war is one of the most effectual means of preserving the peace.*

*George Washington*

To build a service that is structured, educated, and positioned for the challenges of tomorrow, our Corps must work with singularity of purpose in developing concepts and plans for the future. To achieve these ends, we will:



- Conduct an assessment that examines the next phase of the Long War — where it might take us, what the nature of the adversary may be, when the next conflict might occur, and how we can best shape conditions now for success.
- Evolve Marine Corps and naval operating concepts that address our contributions to Combatant Commanders' theater security cooperation plans even as we maintain our contingency and crisis response capability.
- Develop innovative basing plans that enable a broad spectrum of training, position forces for MAGTF operations, and adequately support our Marines and their families — particularly in repositioning forces across the Pacific and on Guam.
- Develop better readiness and sustainment indicators based on *predictive* modeling, so that timely changes to strategies, plans, and programs can be implemented.
- Assess the health of PME programs, take advantage of recent studies on the subject, and make recommendations for reorganization, resourcing, and adjusting throughput that will ensure our intellectual readiness.
- Continue to develop centers of excellence and formalized training for our ground forces as they increasingly prepare to conduct independent operations at lower echelons of command.
- Re-energize Marine Mail to provide a forum for Marines of all ranks to engage in the professional exchange of ideas affecting our Corps.

## Taking Care of Marines & Their Families

***Marines take care of their own — period.*** This enduring pledge between Marines is never more sacred than during time of war. Just as every Marine makes a commitment to the Corps when they earn the title Marine, the Corps makes an enduring commitment to every Marine — and an enduring commitment to their family. Therefore, our Corps will:

- Continue support to our wounded warriors. Just as we engage enemies on the battlefield, we must be equally aggressive in our support for Marines and Sailors who bear the scars of battle. To all our injured warriors — those Marines who suffer visible wounds and those who bear the less visible wounds of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder or Traumatic Brain Injury — our commitment to you will not falter.
- Stand up a Wounded Warrior Regiment. The mission of the Regiment will be to track and assist wounded Marines and Sailors. With battalion

headquarters on both coasts, commanded by post-command officers selected by the Commandant, the Regiment will add discipline and continuity to taking care of our own.

- Ensure our Family and Single Marine Programs have fully transitioned to a wartime footing in order to fulfill the promises made to our families.
- More completely integrate our military, civilian, charitable, and Veterans Affairs programs to better meet the needs of our Marines, our injured Marines, and our families.

*To care for him who shall have  
borne the battle and for his  
widow and his orphan ...*

*Abraham Lincoln  
Second Inaugural Address*

- Expand existing safety programs to ensure we are providing all Marines with the tools necessary to safeguard themselves whether deployed or in garrison. New programs should be centered on effective NCO and company grade leadership for, as they are in battle, they are our front line leaders.

## Our Ethos: A Legacy of Discipline & Selfless Service

Our country understands that whenever our national interests are threatened, there will be brave young Americans who unflinchingly respond by choosing to become Marines. Their experience at Boot Camp is the stuff of legends — and no Marine who has ever fallen in on the “yellow footprints” can forget the weeks that followed. The transformation that young Americans experience as they become United States Marines is a national treasure — one that we must preserve and guard carefully. The values of Honor, Courage, and Commitment — imprinted on their souls during recruit training and strengthened thereafter — mark a Marine’s character for a lifetime.

As Marines join their first units, a powerful bond of trust develops in their fellow warriors — created from the certainty that each will demonstrate moral courage, leadership, and professional competence. This certainty is not an abstract thing in our Corps. Each Marine expects to see every other Marine simply determine the right thing to do — then go do it. The rigors of combat demand no less.

*When Marines go to war, they invariably turn in a performance that is dramatically and decisively successful — not most of the time, but always. ... The mere association of the word “Marines” with a crisis is an automatic source of encouragement and confidence everywhere.*

*LtGen Victor H. Krulak  
First to Fight*

I trust our leaders at all levels to be “keepers of the flame” and to further instill our Core Values. The determination and leadership of our NCOs in the face of adversity is the foundation of our Corps’ success. Our staff noncommissioned officers are the bedrock of our Marine discipline and have proven their mettle throughout history as well as in our ranks today. Our commanders, as they have always done, impart integrity and mental toughness to the fight. Theirs is the

challenge of leading their Marines with firmness, fairness, and dignity: each must create a command environment wherein Marines are given responsibility, challenged to demonstrate moral and physical courage, and held accountable for their actions. This is the crucible which for generations has shaped our Marines and our Corps — such that we have no equal.

***This Nation has high expectations of her Marines — as she should. That confidence is the legacy of all those who have worn the eagle, globe, and anchor — one born from selfless service and a disciplined, educated approach to the profession of arms. Generations of Marines of every race, color, and creed have passed to us an abiding obligation to personify those traits that represent our Corps and the best of America. These traits are an inseparable part of our heritage — a heritage of service to our Nation, our Corps, our fellow Marines, and our families.***

***Marines, I am proud of you and I am proud of our success on the battlefield. The colors have been passed to a new generation: one worthy of the title “Marine” — and the legacy of our past. The men and women of today’s Corps stand shoulder-to-shoulder with “those who have gone before” with a proud and deserved reputation of honorable and heroic service to our Nation. I am confident of our future as the Nation’s Force of Choice: you have earned this distinction. Together, we will write yet another chapter of honorable service in the history of our Corps.***

**Semper Fidelis,**

James T. Conway  
General, U.S. Marine Corps  
Commandant of the Marine Corps